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ABSTRACT

This report details 2001-2002 findings of an annual, national survey of the attitudes and plans of American adolescents. Participating in the telephone survey was a nationally representative sample of 1,014 students 13 to 18 years of age in ninth through twelfth grade. The report summarizes findings "at a glance" and discusses findings under the following headings: (1) schools making the grade; (2) academic approaches; (3) students and social pressure; (4) students and their families; (5) role models; (6) life beyond school; and (7) youth views on the media. Among the key findings, the report notes that American youth feel supported by their families, teachers, and administrators. Respondents believe that the schools do everything they can to keep their students safe. Findings offer strong evidence that all elements of students' lives relate to one another. Home life, social life, pressures, and after-school work life all strongly influence students' school life. Three distinct approaches to academics were identified among today's students, who were classified as follows: front-row students take school seriously and put great effort into studies; middle-seat students appreciate education but do not always make it their first priority; and back-row students' priorities lie outside of school and are less involved in schools. These groups were distinct in their responses concerning their academics, extracurricular activities, their worries, and their social lives. Finally, students reported particular challenges regarding safety in school, financial pressures, and their grades. The report includes 40 data tables. (KB)

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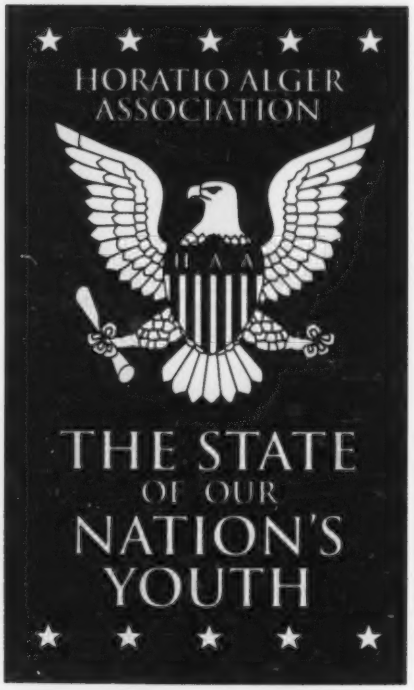
STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH

2001-2002



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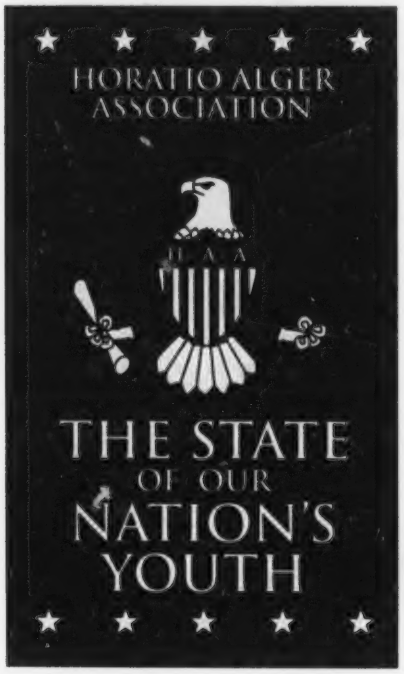

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The *STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH* is an annual effort to give voice to what's on the minds and in the hearts of the country's young people. In undertaking this important project, the Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans is honored to have partners who share our dedication to bringing the hopes, dreams, opinions and concerns of our children to the attention of the nation.

First and foremost, the Association is grateful to its Board of Directors and all of its Members for their strong, continuing commitment to this effort. We extend a special note of appreciation to Mr. & Mrs. George L. Argyros, Mr. & Mrs. Terry M. Giles, Mr. & Mrs. H. Wayne Huizenga, Mr. & Mrs. Richard L. Knowlton, Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth L. Lay, Mr. & Mrs. James R. Moffett, Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Neubauer, Mr. & Mrs. Walter Scott, Jr., Mr. & Mrs. Dennis R. Washington and Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Welters.

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INTRODUCTION

The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans is pleased to present the results of its 2001-2002 *State of Our Nation's Youth* survey. Each year, the Association conducts a survey of America's young people between the ages of 14 and 18. Our objective is to learn what is on their minds so that we may better understand and assist America's youth. The Horatio Alger Association of Distinguished Americans is pleased to make its findings available to educators and the community at large.

The Association was founded in 1947 for the purpose of recognizing and celebrating Americans who have overcome adversity to achieve success through hard work and persistence. In persevering to their goals, these individuals have learned that the "American Dream" is indeed real and attainable. With the presentation of the Horatio Alger Award, the Association salutes American achievers as role models for young people because they have experienced the boundless opportunities afforded by our nation's free enterprise system. Through the generosity of our members, the Horatio Alger Association presents more than $3 million annually in college scholarships to promising high school seniors who, like the Association's members, have overcome some of life's most difficult challenges.

The *State of Our Nation's Youth Report* is another means through which the Horatio Alger Association endeavors to assist young people. By giving voice to teenagers' thoughts, concerns, opinions, and aspirations, we gain a better understanding of how our culture affects young people and how we might best serve them. The Association has been pleased to work with the firm of Peter D. Hart Research Associates, Inc., in conducting this year's annual back-to-school survey. With their assistance, the 2001-2002 *State of Our Nation's Youth Report* incorporates responses from youth balanced to reflect the gender, geographic, ethnic, and socio-economic makeup of the United States.

Overall, we think you will be pleased by what you read in this report. Our young people are our nation's future, and that future is brighter than one might expect. While the media often heralds negative experiences and actions by young people, a broader spectrum paints a different picture. According to these responses, the majority of young people look to a family member as their most influential role model; most young people give their schools positive ratings; and the majority has at least one adult at school in whom they can confide. However, there are issues which should be of concern to adults. Students continue to experience pressure regarding drugs and drinking. Also, loneliness and "fitting in" are difficult for many young people. The more we understand, the better prepared we will be to support young Americans on their journey to responsible adulthood.

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At A Glance

Schools Making The Grade

	"A"s	"B"s	"C"s	"D"s/"F"s
Students report their grades	20%	41%	33%	6%
Students grade their schools	20%	48%	22%	10%

	Applies To Me
At least one teacher or administrator personally cares about my success	89%
I can talk to a teacher or administrator about school problems	88%
My teachers and administrators have taken all the necessary steps to help me feel safe and secure at school	74%
I can talk to a teacher or administrator about personal problems	71%

	A Great Deal	A Fair Amount	A Little	Not At All
Worry about school safety/security	22%	14%	30%	34%

Academic Approaches

	Percentage of Students
Front-row students	34%
Middle-seat students	39%
Back-row students	27%

	A Priority	Secondary
Studies and grades	63%	32%
Homework	44%	49%

	0-5	6-10	11-15	16+
Hours per week on homework	58%	26%	9%	6%

Students and Social Pressure

	Percentage Of Students
Under control	48%
Under pressure	31%

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	Problem	Not A Problem
Pressure to get good grades	62%	38%
Pressure to look a certain way	46%	53%
Family pressures	46%	54%
Financial pressure	42%	57%
Pressure to do drugs or drink	36%	64%
Loneliness or feeling left out	33%	67%
Pressure to have sex	30%	69%

	Biggest Cause Of School Violence
Students bullying other students	29%
Parents not being involved	27%
Schools not noticing troubled teens	13%
Declining morals and values	12%
Guns and weapons being too easy to get	10%
Too much violence in the media	6%

Students And Their Families

	Mother	Father	Both	Step-Parent
Students live with	88%	63%	57%	10%

	Applies To Me
There is at least one family member who I can confide in and talk to about things	90%

	Family	Friend	Entertainer	Teacher
Students identify role models	46%	16%	12%	7%

Life Beyond School

	None	At Least One	Two Or More	Three Or More
Extracurricular activities	15%	85%	49%	30%

	Yes
Work a job outside school	43%

Life After High School

	Critical	Important	Somewhat Important	Not At All Important
For success in life, college is	35%	49%	14%	2%

	Applies To Me
Plan to attend college immediately after high school	74%
Immediately college-bound and first generation	18%

Immediately college-bound

	Very Important For Success
Having close family relationships	84%
Having a close group of friends	60%
Making a contribution to society	49%
Having an active religious life	44%
Making a lot of money	35%
Being famous and respected	27%
Being attractive and popular	8%

OVERVIEW

Today's schools may have much work to do to achieve the American standard of excellence, but the 2001 State of Our Nation's Youth survey proves that in the eyes of America's high school students, far more in their lives is right than is wrong. From home to school, American youth are essentially upbeat. They feel supported by their families, teachers, and administrators. They believe that their schools do everything that they can to keep their students safe. They work hard and keep their studies in perspective. Their plans for the future are well-defined and ambitious. And their definitions of success include good relationships and social improvements, not money or fame.

The findings from this year's survey of American youth offer strong evidence that all elements of students' lives relate to one another. Home life, social life, pressures, and after-school work life all strongly influence students' school life: their propensity to hold a job, the degree to which they have a trusted adult in whom to confide, their belief in the importance of going to college, and the strength of their family are all interconnected.

All these factors combine to create three distinct approaches to academics among today's students. America's youth can be classified loosely according to where they sit in their classrooms as "front-row students" (34% of all high school students), "middle-seat students" (39%), and "back-row students" (27%). Throughout this year's State of Our Nation's Youth survey, these groups remain distinct in their responses concerning their academics, their extracurricular activities, their worries, and their social lives.

Still, with all the good news that emerges from this year's survey, it also is important not to overlook the challenges that today's students face. Students report particular challenges when it comes to safety in school, financial pressures, and their grades.

Schools Making the Grade

The survey results offer positive news about our nation's schools. When the tables are turned and students are given the chance to grade their own school, half of high school students give their school a B, and an additional one in five award their school high honors, giving it an A. Only one in ten students rate their school as a D or an F.

Still, the grades that students assign to their school translate into a C+ grade point average (GPA). This GPA is nearly identical to those given by administrators and parents of students in elementary, middle, and secondary schools in a comparable survey conducted at approximately the same time. Teachers in that survey gave their school a B- average, making students slightly less positive than their teachers, but in line with their parents and administrators. As the attention paid to education reform shows, America's schools have room for improvement. However, the 2001 State of Our Nation's Youth survey confirms that America's schools are far from failing in the eyes of their students.

Other survey findings indicate that schools are in fact rising to the challenges resulting from changes in society and the shifting demographics of high school students. One of the most serious challenges facing high schools in recent years is safety. The current findings attest that high schools are succeeding in their efforts to make students feel safe at school. Although some students still worry, most do not worry a great deal; nearly two-thirds are worried only a little or not at all.

Students also believe that the teachers and administrators in their school care about their safety as well as their academic and, strikingly, even their personal problems. Three-quarters affirm that teachers and administrators have taken all the necessary steps to make them feel safe, and nine in ten say that at least one teacher or administrator personally cares about their success. The vast majority of teens confirm that they can talk to at least one teacher or administrator about school problems, and most say that they can talk to someone at school about personal problems as well. Although some back-row students feel that their school offers them little support, most front-row and middle-seat students offer strong statements of appreciation for the teachers and administrators with whom they feel a personal connection.

When it comes to the debate over education reform, students, as do their parents, believe that reducing class sizes is the best path to better schools. They feel that having more computers available, testing students to ensure they are learning basic skills, and increasing teachers' salaries also would be positive steps. Lengthening the school day or year is not a popular suggestion.

Academic Approaches

The survey asks students to be honest in reporting the grades they received on their last report card. One in five students earned mostly As, and roughly twice that number received grades of B or higher. A quarter say they earned a mix of Bs and Cs, and one in seven admit that they received mostly Cs or lower.

Segmentation of high school students yields interesting findings about their different approaches to academics. Based on their responses to questions about the importance of college, their priorities, their challenges, and other factors, students divide into three general groups that describe how they view school and their classes.

The phrase "front-row students" describes the one-third of high school students who take school very seriously and put great effort into their studies. Two in five are "middle-seat students"—those who appreciate their education, but do not always make it the first priority in their life. The term "back-row students" describes the remaining students, whose priorities lie outside school; they typically put less emphasis on their studies and are less involved in their school. Analysis of these three segments shows compelling evidence that working outside school, social pressures, and family life all are strongly related to academic approaches and achievement.

Although students recognize that math, English, and computers are important subjects for success, when asked to name their favorite classes, they identify art, music, drama, and sports. Male and female high school students, however, differ considerably on this topic. The survey reinforces the stereotype that young women prefer the arts, English, and foreign languages, and that young men lean toward sports, science, math, and computers.

Students And Social Pressure

Students today feel the same kinds of pressures that high school students have always felt, but to differing degrees. Thinking about the major challenges that young people of every generation face, today's youth are divided over whether they have it easier now or whether their parents had it easier when they were young. For example, students believe that it was easier for their parents to get good grades then, but that it is easier to earn extra money now.

Another segmentation allows for analysis of two groups of students and their approaches to stress. Although nearly all teenagers interviewed say that they have at least one problem, they divide into two categories on this issue. The first, representing about a third of the sample, are categorized as "under pressure." These pressures may come from academics, family, finances, or friends, among others. The second group, constituting nearly half the sample, report that they are "under control." They may feel the same pressures as the first group of students, but these pressures are seldom perceived as serious problems in their life.

Among both groups, strong evidence emerges that all the pressures felt by high school students are at least somewhat interrelated. The degree to which students feel one pressure affects the degree to which they may feel another. Students in the front row are much more likely to feel under control, middle-seat students are only somewhat more likely to feel under control than under pressure, and back-row students tend to feel more pressured than the students who sit in front of them.

Students And Their Families

The data provide clues about the changing nature of the American family. Popular perception makes the notion of teenagers' living with both their parents seem outdated, and to a degree this year's survey confirms that impression: only 57% of students live in traditional families with both their parents. An overwhelming majority of those who live in a single-parent household live with their mother. Overall, fewer than two in three teens have a father in their household. That proportion falls to about half among Hispanics and to only four in ten among African Americans.

As mentioned, students' relationships with their family are strongly correlated with their attitudes toward academics. Students who name a family member as their role model or who say they have a family member to confide in tend to take school more seriously, to make it a priority, and to sit in the front and middle rows. Furthermore, students' plans for college are strongly linked to their parents' education level.

And in the wake of the shootings at Columbine and Santana, it makes sense to ask students what they see as the most important causes of such tragedies plaguing America's schools. A significant proportion of students identify a lack of parental involvement, or parents' not spending enough time with their children, as the biggest cause of violence in schools. This belief runs counter to the stereotype of teenagers' striving for independence, but the data indicate that young people are looking for parents to become more involved in their life and that they benefit in tangible ways from greater parental involvement.

Role Models

Much has been made of the supposed propensity of today's youth to choose entertainers or pop icons as role models. This survey shows that to be true in only a few cases, however. When asked to name the one person whom they consider to be a role model, nearly half of all students choose a family member, and that family member is most likely to be their mother. Fathers are the

second-most common family member named as a role model, followed by siblings, grandparents, and other relatives.

After family members, students are most likely to choose a friend or family friend as a role model. Entertainers such as artists, writers, or musicians place third, followed by teachers, sports figures, and religious leaders, in that order. Only slightly fewer students pick a business or political leader as their role model.

As with most elements of the survey, students' choice of role models is related to their approach to academics. Front-row students choose a family member as a role model in higher numbers than students on average, and in substantially higher numbers than do middle-seat or back-row students.

Life Beyond School

Although the State of Our Nation's Youth is a survey of students, it is not just about school. Today's high school, or secondary education, experience transcends the classroom. Students spend much of their time in class, but most of their life goes on outside classrooms. Although nearly two-thirds of students say that it is important to them to do the best they can in their classes, a third admit that their studies are not the top priority in their life.

Most students spend an hour or less a night doing homework. More than two in five of today's youth hold jobs during the school year, and those who have jobs spend more time at work than doing homework. Students know that homework is important, and close to half say that they make it a priority; but the other half maintain that it is just too hard to find the time to get it done. Students in the front row are much more likely to say that their homework is their top priority, back-row students much less likely.

Today's students work for a variety of reasons. For the vast majority, the primary motivation to take an after-school job is to earn money. Most of these students do not work because they need to, but because they appreciate having money of their own—underscoring what American businesses have known for years, that the teen market is a great market. One in four students who hold jobs, however, work because they need the income, either to help their family pay basic bills or to help pay for their college education.

Three in ten students say that they are very involved in their school, but in addition to attending classes, a strong majority participate in at least

one extracurricular activity in their school; nearly one-third participate in three or more activities. Nevertheless, it is worth keeping in mind that a significant proportion say that they do not participate in any extracurricular activity at their school.

Another strong pull on students' time is their social life. Very few teenagers assert that they spend most of their time alone. Instead, most say that they typically spend their time with a group of friends, and one in five report that they hang out with just one or two close friends.

Life After High School

Teenagers' plans for the future are as diverse as their backgrounds. Plans for the months immediately following graduation run the gamut from continuing their education to getting a job, traveling, joining the armed forces, joining a volunteer organization, and getting married. Front-row and middle-seat students are making similar plans for their future, with back-row students significantly less likely to see college on their immediate horizon.

A majority of secondary school students agree that attending college is critical or very important to their success in life, and most plan to attend college at some point. Very few are not making plans for some type of college, and for more than two-thirds of students, attending college means going to a traditional four-year institution..

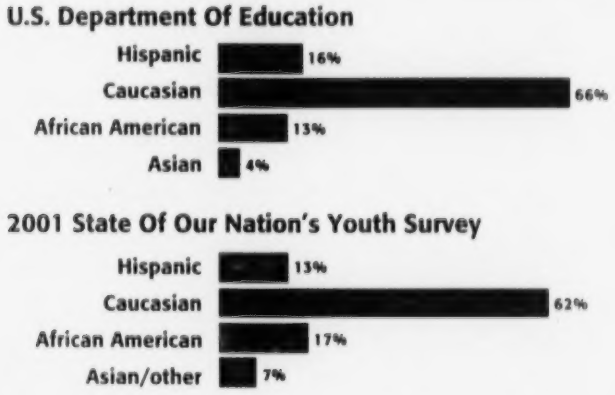
The diversity among today's high school students is illustrated by their various definitions of success. When asked to look ahead and think about their personal definition of success, most of today's youth say that having close family relationships is very important to them. Similarly, many teenagers say that having a close group of friends will be an important measurement in gauging their success in life. Traditional definitions of success, such as making money and being famous, are less important to this generation of Americans.

THE STATE OF OUR NATION'S YOUTH

In 2001, the best word to describe America's youth is "diverse." Recently released data from the Department of Education indicate that America's public high schools are 13% Hispanic, 16% African American, and 66% Caucasian. This year's results from the State of Our Nation's Youth survey matches those demographics, reporting an American high school population that is 13% Hispanic, 17% African American, and 62% Caucasian. In fact, America's youth are even more diverse ethnically and racially than is the American adult population.

It is equally true that students are diverse in other aspects of their life: in their interests, their home life, their approaches to academics, their challenges, and their plans for the future. Anyone looking to the survey for a definition of the typical teenager will be disappointed. Attempts at narrow classifications would be a disservice to the youth of America, who come from more varied circumstances and are heading in more different directions than ever before.

Racial And Ethnic Distribution Of High School Students

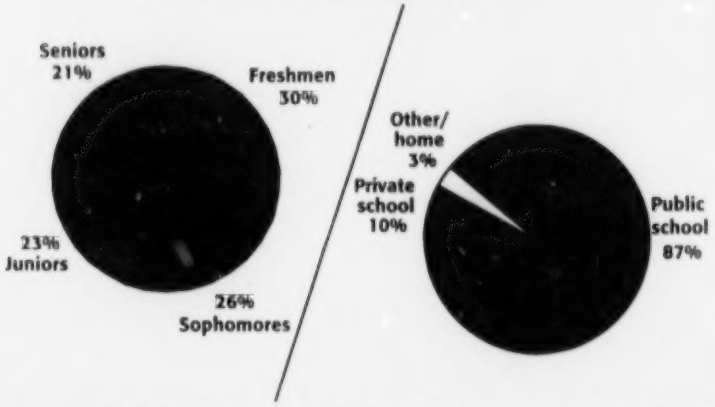


The survey reflects the population of students attending grades nine through twelve, which leans slightly toward the younger grades due to early graduation, dropouts, and various other factors. The findings also indicate that dropout rates are substantially higher in some areas of the country than in others. Rural areas, small towns, and suburbs tend to have lower dropout rates and therefore show a more even distribution of students among grade levels. Overall, 30% of today's teens are in ninth grade, which is middle school in some school districts, but in traditional gradation terminology, ninth-graders are referred to as freshmen in high

school. Twenty-six percent of teens are sophomores, 23% juniors, and 21% seniors.

Despite a wide variety in types of secondary schools available to today's teens, most (87%) youth today attend public schools. Private schools educate only one in ten of the nation's youth: 7% report that they attend a private religious school, and 3% study at a private non-religious school. Home schooling continues to play a minute role in American education, as only 1% of secondary school students say that they attend classes at home.

Distribution Of High School Students



The greatest proportion of America's youth lives and attends school in cities (32%). A quarter (25%) of secondary school students live in suburbs, 29% in small towns, and 12% in rural areas of the country. Students living in cities are slightly less likely to hold a job during the school year (38% in cities, 46% in suburbs, 45% in small towns, and 44% in rural areas). Reflecting higher crime rates in urban areas, students in cities are somewhat more likely to say that they worry a great deal or a fair amount about their safety during the school day (42% in cities, 30% in suburbs, 37% in small towns, and 29% in rural areas.)

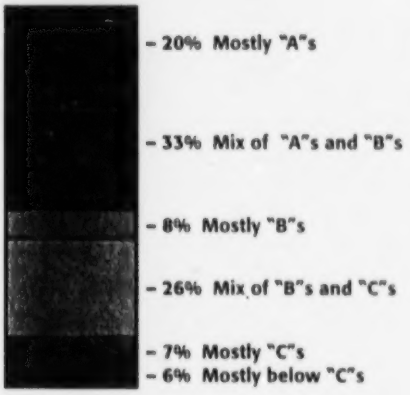
The survey does not ask teens to report their family income, but rather their sense of where their family falls in comparison to "average income." Thirty-nine percent of the nation's youth report that their family income is just about average, 21% describe their family income as below average, and 36% say that it is above average. Within those percentages, only 3% of teens say that their family income is far below average, and only 5% describe it as far above average.

Interestingly, family income has little effect on whether students have a job during the school year: 43% of students who say their family income is average held a job last year, as did 48% of below-average-income students

and 42% of above-average-income students. Income level also has little effect on students' perceptions of the importance of college—among those who report below-average income, 81% believe that college is critical or very important for success; 85% of teens in average-income households and 84% living in above-average-income homes say the same. Still, students who report below-average income are somewhat more likely to feel some of the typical pressures on teens, such as financial pressure, pressure to look a certain way, pressure to do drugs or drink, and loneliness.

Although the State of Our Nation's Youth study does not collect information from schools that would enable this report to discuss actual grades received by students, it does ask students to report the grades they received on their last report card. By that measure, one in five students interviewed belong on the honor roll, as they report receiving mostly As. Eight percent of teens earned mostly Bs on their last report card, and an additional 33% say that their grades were a mix of As and Bs. A third of students say that their grades were mostly Bs and Cs or all Cs, and only 6% admit that they received mostly grades below a C. Students in their senior year tend to report higher grades than their younger counterparts. Seventy-one percent of seniors report that they received mostly As and Bs or better on their last report card, compared with 61% of juniors, 58% of sophomores, and 56% of freshmen who say the same.

High School Students Describe Their Last Report Card



FINDINGS

Life for today's high school students may not be simple or easy, but this year's State of Our Nation's Youth survey shows that they see far more right than wrong in their lives. They may not live in traditional families, but they feel that they can count on their families for support. They may not always feel safe in school, but they know that their teachers and administrators care about their concerns. They realize the challenge of paying for college, but believe in its importance and plan on continuing their education after high school. They have problems, but refuse to let them interfere with their lives. They feel pressured for time, but find time for their studies. They care about success, but define success in terms of relationships and contributions, not money or fame.

Attempts to define America's high school students must include factors from all parts of their lives, as this year's survey offers strong evidence that all areas of teenagers' lives—family, social life, extracurricular activities, work outside school, and social pressures—are interrelated and affect the life that students lead.

Schools Making The Grade

This year's survey indicates that schools are meeting the needs of today's youth. American high schools may not be perfect, but students believe that their schools are making the grade in many important ways. When students get an opportunity to grade their school, the schools pass with fairly high marks. A strong majority (68%) of students give their schools an A or a B; 22% rate their school as average, assigning it a C; and only one in ten rate their school as a D or an F. Overall, American secondary schools pass with a 2.7 grade point average (GPA) on a four-point scale. Those students who take school more seriously and perform to higher standards tend to grade their school higher.

Peter D. Hart Research Associates, together with Robert Teeter's Coldwater Corporation, recently conducted a separate study for the Educational Testing Service that asked parents, educators, and education policymakers (school superintendents and others within state departments of education) to grade schools using the same scale. Although that study discussed all primary and secondary grades (K–12), a comparison of the results is nonetheless interesting. Educators give the highest grades, assigning the school in which they teach a 3.1 GPA. Parents assign their children's school a 2.8 GPA, and policymakers give schools in their community a 2.8 GPA. Regardless of an individual's relationship to

a school, Americans tend to grade their local school higher than they grade schools nationwide. American adults give the schools overall a low-C grade, assigning the nation's schools only a 2.0 GPA. All in all, these figures show that students, parents, and teachers do not differ considerably in their assessments of the quality of their local school. Though substantial room for improvement may still exist, as A grades are relatively rare, few see our schools as failing.

What Grade Would You Give Your School?

Spring 2001

Report Card

Your School/Child's School/Community's Schools

	High school students	Parents*	Educators*	Education policy-makers*
A	20%	27%	30%	18%
B	48%	38%	52%	49%
C	22%	25%	13%	28%
D	6%	6%	4%	2%
F	4%	3%	1%	1%
GPA	2.7	2.8	3.1	2.8

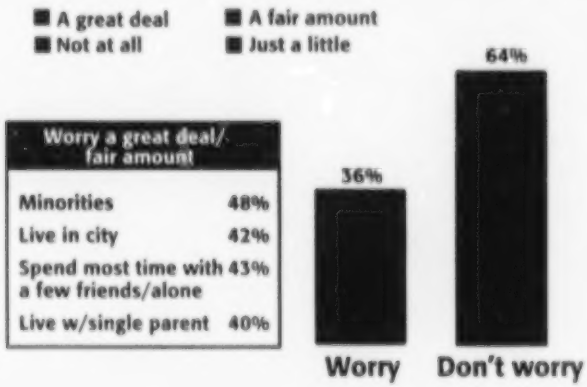
** grading elementary/middle/high schools*

Following such tragic incidents as the multiple shootings at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, and Santana High School in Santee, California, much of the nation's attention has turned to the issue of school safety. On a deeper level, serious thought has been given to questions about students' alienation, loneliness, and pressure. The survey reveals a great deal about students' feelings on these issues, and the findings are largely reassuring.

The survey yields strong evidence that American schools are responding to the increased incidences of violence among teenagers, and within school walls. Although 36% of secondary school students do worry a great deal or a fair amount about their safety at school, fully three-quarters (74%) say that the teachers and administrators in their school have taken all the necessary steps to make them feel safe at school. Students still worry about their safety in school, but they know that the schools themselves are not the problem and that schools are doing all they can to keep their students safe.

Most Students Feel Safe In School, But Many Still Worry

How much do you worry about safety/student bringing gun to school?



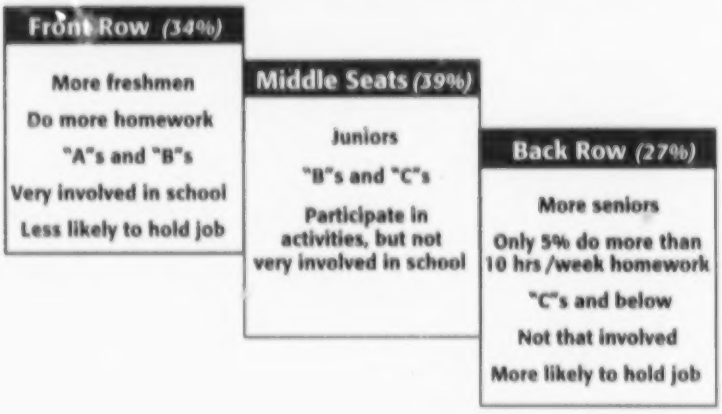
Much of this confidence reflects the support that students receive from teachers and administrators. An overwhelming majority (88%) of secondary school students say that they have a teacher or administrator to whom they can talk about school problems, and the same proportion (89%) believe that at least one particular teacher or administrator personally cares about their success. In addition, students' trust in their teachers and administrators extends beyond the classroom and academic dilemmas, as 71% acknowledge that they have a teacher or administrator to whom they can talk about personal problems. Importantly, this holds true even for a majority of students whose focus is not on academics.

Academic Approaches

Today's students approach their academic life in varying ways. Segmentation of data collected through the 2001 State of Our Nation's Youth survey yields three approximate but distinct approaches to academics. The segmentation takes into account students' responses to questions about the significance of a college degree, interest in coursework, and the importance of completing homework. For the purposes of this report, these criteria are used to place teens into one of three categories: front-row students, middle-seat students, and back-row students. Students' self-reported grades do not factor into the segmentation. Still, these divisions, which are based on students' approaches to their academic studies, do a fairly good job of dividing them into groups that receive high, middling, and lower grades.

One-third of today's youth fall into the front-row category. These students approach their schoolwork as though it is a real job that they enjoy; they treat school as a profession and take their studies seriously. Females are more likely to be front-row students than are males (57% to 43%). Almost three-quarters (72%) of front-row students earn grades that rarely fall below Bs, including 28% who earn mostly As. In addition, students in the front row are 11 percentage points more likely than average to say that they are very or somewhat involved in their school (90% front row, 79% all students), and they also are somewhat more likely than average to participate in extracurricular activities. These students' lives are full, their aspirations are high, and their support networks are strong.

Classifying Students' Approaches To Academics



Middle-seat students (39% of the sample) take a somewhat more relaxed approach to their schoolwork. They put in extra work for tests and want to do well, but they tend not to worry as much about academics on a day-to-day basis. These students still receive some As on their report card, but they receive more Bs and Cs than do front-row students (64% receive a mix of As and Bs or mostly Bs; 19% receive mostly As).

Back-row students, who represent about one in four (27%) students, put other activities before their studies. They spend less time on homework and place less importance on a college degree. One-third (33%) receive a mix of Bs and Cs, and 16% earn grades that are below a C average. These students are 11 percentage points more likely than average to work at a job outside school, and those who do work are likely to work more hours than do front-row or middle-seat students who have a job. These students do not work out of need, however, as they are seven points more likely than average to say that they work for extra money and no more likely to say that they work to help their family pay bills.

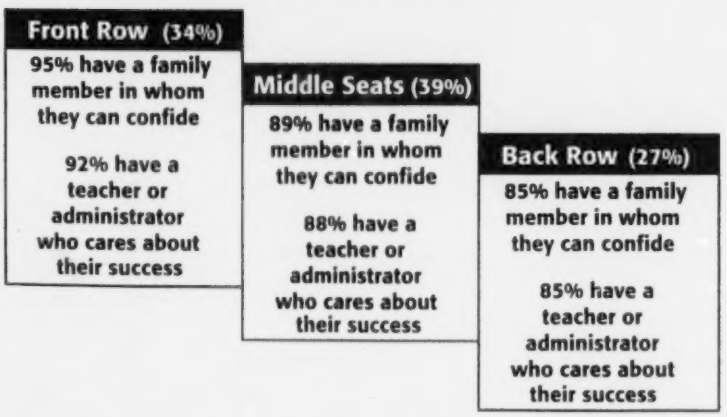
Freshmen comprise the largest proportion of front-row students, at 34%, and that proportion declines steadily as students progress to the higher grades. Overall, freshmen and sophomores are much more likely to sit in the front rows than in the back, juniors tend to cluster in the middle seats, and seniors are more likely than their younger colleagues to drift into the back row. Thus, in a class of 100 students, approximately 12 students will shift toward the back of the classroom as they advance from their freshman to senior year.

A combination of factors—their home life, school, social life, and activities outside the classroom—drives the approach that students take toward academics. Even though each student is affected by his or her particular circumstances, the survey identifies common elements that affect most teens positively, as well as elements that create additional challenges for some. The findings also indicate that students are seldom influenced by just one factor; rather, a combination of influences from different parts of their life shapes their academic attitudes, worries, and life outside school.

One of the most significant factors at play in students' attitude toward school and their academic success is the extent to which they can count on support from their family. This is evident when students are segmented by their approach to academics. Teenagers who have a family member in whom they can confide tend to be front-row students in much higher proportions (35%) than are those without a family member on whom they can depend (18%). The latter are nearly twice as likely to be back-row students (26% who have a family member in whom they can confide and 40% who do not are in the back row).

Support from a family member also relates to the degree to which students make their studies a priority, and the grades they ultimately receive.

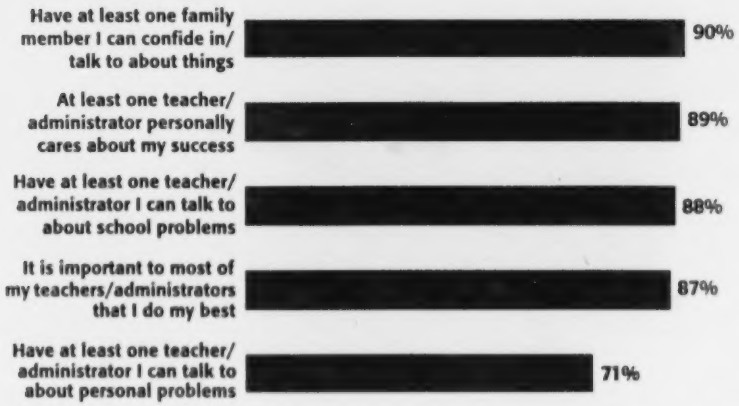
Support Helps Students At Head Of Class


Front Row (34%)
95% have a family member in whom they can confide
92% have a teacher or administrator who cares about their success
Middle Seats (39%)
89% have a family member in whom they can confide
88% have a teacher or administrator who cares about their success
Back Row (27%)
85% have a family member in whom they can confide
85% have a teacher or administrator who cares about their success

Students with a family member to talk to are 27 points more likely than those without this benefit to say that they make their studies and grades a priority in their life, which is evident in the grades these students report earning: 62% of these students say they received mostly As and Bs, compared with half (49%) of students who have no one to talk to at home.

Most Students Feel Supported

(% saying each situation applies to them)


Have at least one family member I can confide in/ talk to about things
90%
At least one teacher/ administrator personally cares about my success
89%
Have at least one teacher/ administrator I can talk to about school problems
88%
It is important to most of my teachers/administrators that I do my best
87%
Have at least one teacher/ administrator I can talk to about personal problems
71%

Young people who live with two parents and those from single-parent families are equally likely to sit in the front row, but students from dual-parent families are less likely to be sitting in the back row (25% of teens from two-parent family, 31% of teens from single-parent family). Regardless of where they sit in the classroom, students living with two parents report somewhat better grades (66% As and Bs) than those living with only one parent (51% As and Bs).

Another strong indicator of academic approach and performance comes from the degree to which students believe they can count on their teachers and administrators for support and safety. Teens who feel that they can talk to their teachers and administrators about their problems are more likely than those who don't feel this way to sit in the front row, make school a priority, and perform better academically. The same can be said of students who think that their teachers and administrators care about students' success and do all they can to ensure students' safety.

Having a teacher or administrator to talk to about academic or school problems makes a significant difference in a secondary school student's approach to academic studies. Students who have the ear of a teacher or administrator about their school problems are more likely to be front-row than back-row students (35% and 26%, respectively), whereas those with-

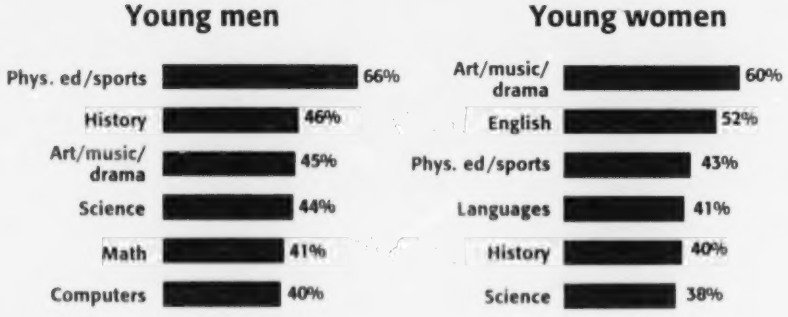
out an academic confidante are more likely to sit in the back row than in the front row (37% and 20%, respectively). These figures are nearly identical for students who have a teacher or administrator to whom they can talk about personal problems. Students who can talk to a teacher or administrator about their school problems also are more likely than those who don't have such a teacher to spend more than 10 hours a week on their homework (17% and 7%).

One of the most positive results to come out of this year's survey is students' feeling that teachers and administrators care about their performance and success in life. Ninety-two percent of front-row students say that their teachers care about their overall success, and even 85% of students in the back row feel the same.

Another positive and encouraging sign is teenagers' recognition that their teachers and administrators care about their performance in school. Almost all (97%) front-row students believe that it is important to most of their teachers and administrators that they do their best in their studies, and this is also true for 76% of back-row students. This belief also translates into better grades, as students with someone at their school who cares that they do their best are 10 points more likely to get As and Bs on their report card (62%) than are those who do not have this type of mentor (52%), and students without this type of person at school are 11 points more likely to earn lower grades (48%) than are those who do have this kind of relationship with a teacher or administrator (37%).

Young Men And Women Pick Different Favorite Classes

(% saying each is one of their favorite classes)

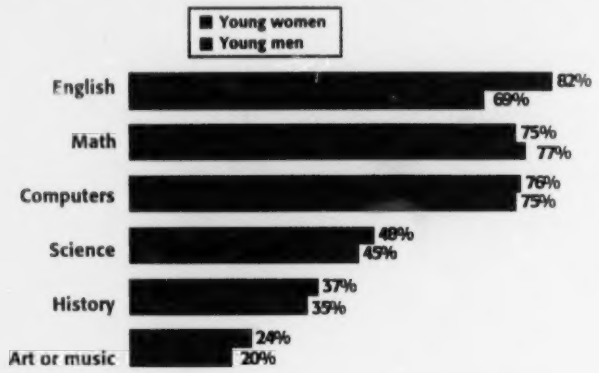


Regarding areas of study, today's students are quick to recognize that math, English, and computers are important subjects for success. When asked to name their favorite classes, however, they are most likely to name elective classes such as physical education and sports (55%), and art, music, and drama (52%). Moreover, males and females differ considerably in their

choices of favorite classes. The survey seems to confirm the popular assumption that young women prefer the arts, English, and foreign languages, whereas young men lean toward sports, science, and math. Both genders, however, agree on which classes are the most important for success.

Young Men & Women Agree On Important Classes for Success

(% rating each as very important, 8-10 on 10-point scale)

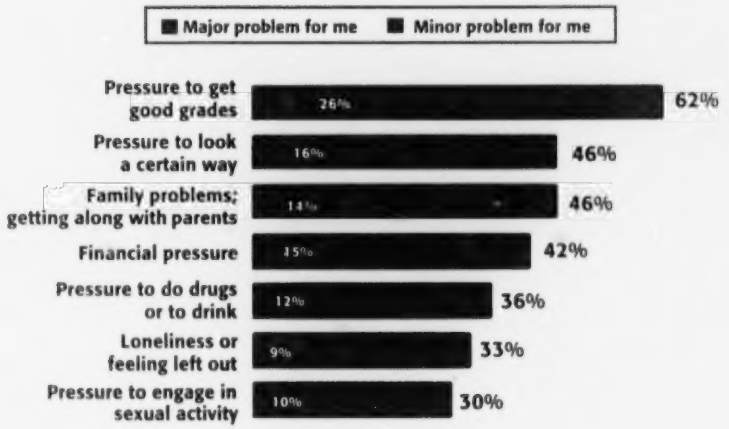


Students And Social Pressure

Teenagers of every generation feel pressures, and today's youth are no exception. In fact, today's teens recognize that many of the same challenges they feel now, their parents also felt at the same age. When asked about getting good grades, more students say that their parents had it easier (35%) than they have it today (24%), but the largest proportion (38%) believe that getting good grades is just as tough today as it was in the past. Most teens also agree that making friends (56%) and meeting a spouse (47%) represent equal challenges now compared with a generation ago. By more than three to one, however, today's youth believe that it is easier now for them to earn extra money than it was for their parents.

The pressures on America's high school students come from many different directions—from their family, school, and friends. The most common problem they face is the pressure to get good grades. One in four students say that too much pressure to earn good grades creates a major problem for them, and an additional 36% feel that it is a minor problem. Students who hang out with a group of friends are more likely to feel pressure to get good grades (64% major/minor problem) than are those who spend their time with a few close friends (60%) or with their family (53%). Minorities overall (68%) feel more pressure to get good grades than do Caucasians (59%); Hispanics, in particular, struggle with this type of academic pressure (71%).

Students Feel Pressured In Many Areas



The second-most common problem is the pressure to look a certain way, which is cited by slightly fewer than half (46%) of all students. Those who describe their family income as below average feel more pressure in this area (53%) than do those who believe that their family income is average (47%) or above average (44%). This finding may reflect lower-income teens' simply lacking the means to keep up with the latest fashion trends and designer names.

Family problems (46%), and to slightly lesser but still significant degrees, financial pressure (42%), pressure to do drugs or to drink (36%), loneliness (33%), and pressure to engage in sexual activity (30%) are considered major or minor problems. While these numbers may be smaller, it is important not to miss the one-third of students for whom loneliness is a problem and the more than one-third of students who feel pressured to do drugs or drink, as these percentages translate into staggering numbers within today's youth population.

Segmenting students by the pressures they feel allows for an analysis of the ways in which these pressures affect teenagers' lives. By combining the answers to questions about each of these problems, today's youth divide into two groups: "under pressure" and "under control." It is impossible for a survey such as this to determine whether the pressures that students feel represent real or perceived problems, but the degree to which students perceive these pressures affects numerous other areas of their life. The ratio of under-pressure to under-control students is similar in each of the four grade levels.

Female students tend to feel lonely, the pressure to look right, and family pressures in much greater proportions than do male students; thus, they make up a disproportionate percentage (57%) of under-pressure students. Under-pressure students also tend to come from families with below-average incomes. The opposite holds true for under-control students, who are more likely to be male (53%) and from above-average-income households.

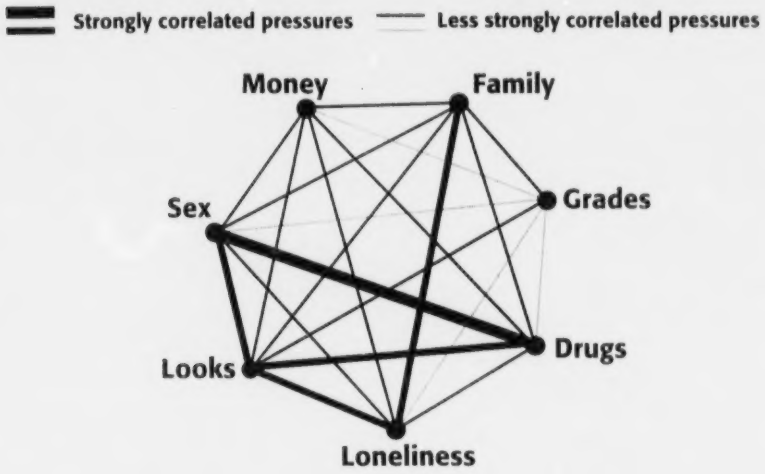
The amount of time that students commit to activities outside the classroom does not seem to affect their level of stress. Both under-pressure and under-control students participate in extracurricular activities in about equal proportions, as the latter are just three points more likely to participate in no activities (17% to 14%) and the former are only four points more likely to participate in two or more activities (52% to 48%). Under-control students (40%) are in fact almost as likely to hold a job outside school as are their counterparts who feel under pressure (46%).

An inverse relationship exists between the amount of pressure that students feel to get good grades and the marks they actually receive. An overwhelming majority (89%) of under-pressure students say that they feel too much pressure to get good grades, yet barely more than half (56%) report earning mostly As and Bs. Only 39% of under-control students feel that they face undue pressure to succeed in the classroom, and nearly two-thirds (64%) of them say that their report card consists mostly of As and Bs.

In addition to achieving greater academic success, under-control students tend to enjoy their classes more and to make their studies and homework a priority. Four in five (79%) under-control students enjoy their coursework, whereas only 64% of under-pressure teens feel the same way. More than half (51%) of under-control students confirm that they complete their homework before other activities, but only 39% of under-pressure students make homework a priority.

It is interesting to note the degree to which these pressures relate to one another. A teen's having a problem or feeling pressure in one area increases the likelihood that he or she will have a problem in another area, in some cases with strong correlation. Roughly half (51%) of students do not report having any major problems at all, and a similar proportion (47%) feel that they have no more than two major or minor problems. Among students who report pressures, most believe that they cause at least minor problems in several aspects of their life; 53% say that pressures cause at least minor problems in three or more areas of their life, and 26% feel that at least five pressures cause problems for them.

Pressures Are All Interconnected



Many of these relationships are logical. It is not surprising that teens who feel pressure to drink or do drugs are substantially more likely to also feel pressure to engage in sexual activity before they are ready: roughly one-third (30%) of students overall say that they feel pressure to engage in sexual activity, but the proportion doubles to 63% among those who say they feel pressure to drink or do drugs. Similarly, just under half (46%) of all students feel under pressure to look a certain way, but this proportion rises to 75% among those who say they feel pressure to engage in sexual activity before they are ready.

Feelings of financial pressure affect 42% of teenagers, especially those in families with lower incomes, and these students are substantially more likely to assert that all the other pressures are causing major or at least minor problems in their life. Particularly strong are pressure to get good grades (75% among students experiencing financial pressure vs. 62% among students overall), family pressure (65%, 46%), and pressure to look a certain way (63%, 46%).

One-third (33%) of all students confirm that loneliness is causing a major or minor problem in their life. As many as half (51%) of the students experiencing financial pressure also state that feeling lonely or left out causes a problem. Students who are experiencing family pressure (46% of all students) also are more likely than average to encounter feelings of loneliness or being left out (51%).

Many students may breeze through their high school years without major concerns, but it is important to keep an eye on the minority who are experiencing pressure in several areas of their teenage life. Each set of pressures intensifies other pressures, and intervening to reduce teens' sense of stress in one area is likely to benefit them in other areas as well.

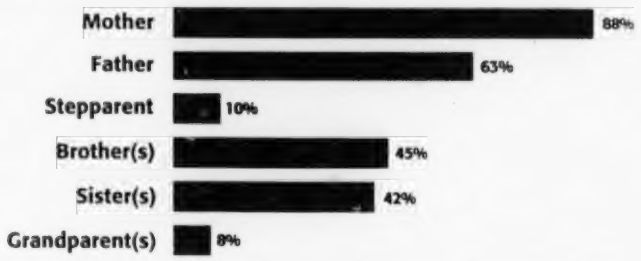
Students And Their Families

The findings from this year's State of Our Nation's Youth show that schools are stepping up to the plate in terms of supporting children, and that parents are holding up their end of the bargain. Despite the popular perception that teenagers and parents do not get along, the strength of families is a consistent theme throughout the State of Our Nation's Youth survey. Strong family life provides an indicator of students' academic attitudes and ability to deal with various pressures.

It may seem surprising to hear teenagers asking for more parental involvement in their lives, but on at least one measure, that is the case in this survey. When asked to choose the biggest cause of school violence, 27% of secondary school students identify a lack of parental involvement in the lives of their children. Among a list of six choices, the only cause that receives more responses is students picking on or bullying other students (29%). Teens agree with today's adult experts that parental involvement can have a significant impact on children's lives.

A traditional family household, defined as living with one's father and mother, is the living arrangement for only 57% of America's youth. Of the 28% of young people who live in a single-parent household, the majority live with their mother. Overall, nearly nine in 10 (88%) students live with their mother, and that proportion is consistent across racial lines. But the situation is dramatically different when it comes to fathers: only 63% of America's youth live in a household with their father. Although a solid majority (71%) of Caucasian students live with their father, only 51% of Hispanic students and 40% of African-American students do so. It is important to note, however, that the survey asks only about parents in a student's primary home. It is possible that many students have parents who live outside their home but who still take an active role in their life.

Family Members In The Home



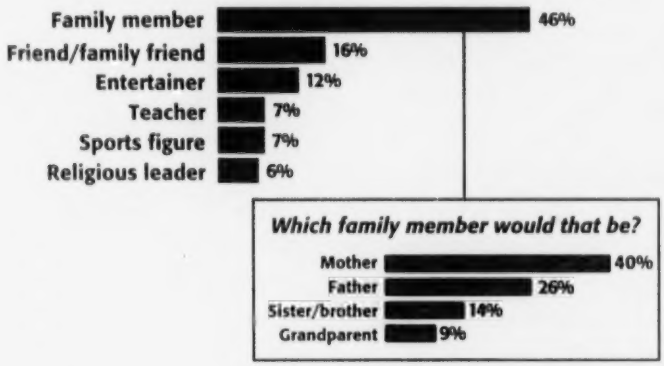
	Caucasians	African Americans	Hispanics
Mother in the home	89%	87%	87%
Father in the home	71%	40%	51%

Only 57% say they live with their mother and father.

The overwhelming majority (90%) of students who say that there is at least one family member in whom they can confide clearly indicates the strength of family ties in America. These students are more likely than average to be a part of the front row, students who take school seriously and perform well. The flip side of this finding, of course, is the troubling fact that teens who do not report having a family member in whom they can confide are more likely to turn up in the back row. More good news for the American family comes from the 46% of students who, when asked to identify just one person as a role model, choose a member of their family. These students also are more likely to be front-row than back-row students.

Students Choose Role Models

If you had to pick one person as a role model, in which of the following categories would that person be?



Role Models

Despite media reports that young people today lack positive role models and look only to pop icons for examples of living, the 2001 State of Our Nation's Youth survey confirms the strength of role models in teenagers' everyday lives. The survey asks students to choose one person whom they consider a role model. Only three of the 1,014 students interviewed say that they do not have a role model. And when asked to categorize their role model, almost half (46%) affirm that person is a family member—more proof of the strength of American families. Teens who identify a family member as their role model are more likely than average to be front-row students (39%, compared with 34% front row overall), and they are much more likely to sit in the front row than are students who choose an entertainer as a role model (21% front row).

Among those teenagers who say that they look up to a family member, the most common role model is their mother (40%). Fathers are the second-most cited role model for those who choose a family member (26%), which means that 15% of students living with their father look up to him

above anyone else. Even among students who do not live with their father, 7% still say that he is their role model. These findings serve as a reminder that although a teenager may not live with his or her father, a strong relationship between father and child may still exist. After their parents, youth who choose family members as role models look up to siblings (14%), grandparents (9%), aunts or uncles (6%), and cousins (3%).

Whereas family members are the most likely people to be role models, 16% of teenagers say they look up to a friend or family friend the most. Beyond that, people in the entertainment industry are likely role models for 12% of teens. Sports figures (7%) and teachers (7%) fall slightly below those in the entertainment industry, followed by religious leaders (6%) and business leaders (3%). Only 2% of today's teenagers choose a political leader as their role model.

In today's era of mass media culture, it is interesting that students who choose as a role model an entertainer over a family member or friend tend to feel more pressure to look a certain way (entertainer 51% major/minor problem, friend 46%, family member 45%). In particular, young women who emulate entertainers are more likely than average to say that pressure to look a certain way is a problem for them (57%). Additionally, students who choose entertainers as role models are more likely than average to feel pressure to have sex before they are ready.

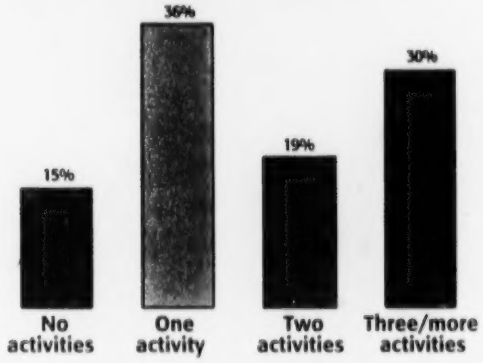
Life Beyond School

Today's students may spend most of their daylight hours inside a classroom, but their lives extend far beyond school walls. Teenagers today are feeling more pulls than ever before on their time. They divide their "free" time among extracurricular activities, outside jobs, friends, and family. Nearly two-thirds (63%) of America's youth say that they make their studies a priority in their life, but the remaining third (32%) acknowledge that their studies are a secondary concern. More striking is the 49% of students who say that they know they should do more homework, but never seem to find the time. Forty-four percent of secondary school students say that they make a point to complete their homework before other activities, but these students are less likely to hold a job.

Extracurricular activities play a prominent role in students' lives. When asked to think about the activities in which they participate and the time they spend in school, 79% of teens say that they are very or somewhat involved in their school. Only 14% describe themselves as not that involved, and only 7% are not involved at all. Besides academic commitments, 85% say that they are involved in at least one activity in their

Involvement In School

[How many extracurricular] activities do you participate in at your school?



school, half (49%) participate in at least two activities, and 30% take part in three or more activities. Only 15% say that they do not participate in any activities at school.

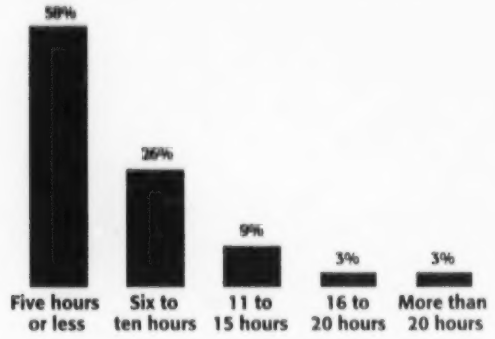
The most popular extracurricular activities involve sports, as 59% of students participate in athletic teams or clubs at their school. Bands, orchestras, and choirs also are a popular draw (more than a quarter), as are drama clubs (16%), honor societies (15%), volunteer clubs (15%), school publications (14%), and career-oriented clubs (12%). The old days of a student body divided between the library crowd and the activity crowd have disappeared.

Jobs outside school are another pull on students' time. Nearly half (43%) of America's youth hold a job outside their school, but that proportion jumps to 59% among high school juniors, and 68% among seniors. The reasons for working vary, but most students do so to earn extra spending money (63% among those who work). One in four employed students, however, works because he or she needs to, whether it is to save for college or to help their family pay the bills. An additional 9% who work report that they hold a job just for the experience or to contribute to society.

It is interesting to compare the hours that students spend doing their homework with the hours that working students spend at their job. Overall, most teens today spend less than an hour an evening on their homework: 58% say that they spend five hours or less per week on their studies. One-quarter spend six to 10 hours a week on homework, or less than two hours per school night, and only 15% report spending more than 10 hours a week doing homework.

Hours Per Week Spent Doing Homework

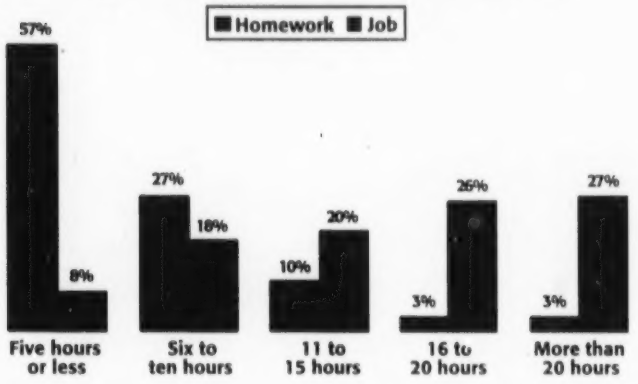
(Among all high school students)



Teens who work outside school spend nearly twice as much time working than completing homework: 73% of students who work spend more than 10 hours a week at a job outside school, including 27% who spend more than 20 hours a week at work. In contrast, only 3% of employed students spend more than 20 hours a week on homework.

Hours Per Week Spent Doing Homework/Working At Job

(Among the 43% of students who have a job)



Students dedicate time left over after classes, homework, extracurricular activities, and jobs to their social and family lives. When it comes to their social life, 69% of America's youth say that they have a group of friends with whom they socialize, and 19% tend to hang out with one or two close friends. The latter proportion increases as students get older, with fully one-quarter of seniors saying that they spend their free time with just

one or two close friends. This finding seems to indicate that as students advance in grade, they tend to dedicate themselves to a few close friends rather than to a less tight-knit or larger group of friends. Only 3% of teenagers acknowledge spending most of their free time alone, and this proportion is consistent across grade levels and ages.

High School Students Describe Their Social Life

I hang out/spend most of my time with:

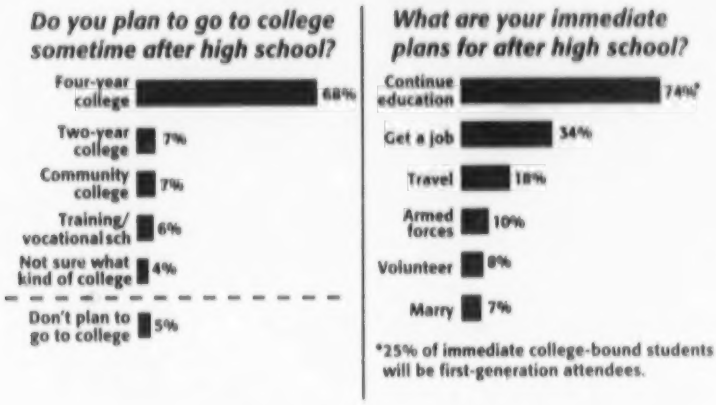
Seven percent of America's youth report that they spend most of their free time with their family. These teenagers are much more likely to make homework a priority than are those who say they hang out mostly with friends.

Life After High School

Despite the demands that academic, social, familial, and extracurricular activities place on students' time, today's youth still find time to focus on their future. Only 2% of students are looking ahead to high school graduation without some kind of plan for their future. For the vast majority of students (92%), graduating from high school means moving on to some form of higher education.

Students today believe strongly that graduating from college is an important element of success later in life. Only 2% of teenagers say that graduating from college is not important at all for success, and 84% think that college is critical or very important. Much of this can be attributed to lessons students learn from their parents. More than two-thirds of teens have at least one parent who attended college. Still, 25% of students who plan to attend college immediately after graduation will be first-generation college students. In particular, 55% of college-bound Hispanic students will be first-generation attendees.

Future Plans For Most Include College


Do you plan to go to college sometime after high school?
Four-year college 68%
Two-year college 7%
Community college 7%
Training/ vocational sch 6%
Not sure what kind of college 4%
Don't plan to go to college 5%
What are your immediate plans for after high school?
Continue education 74%*
Get a job 34%
Travel 18%
Armed forces 10%
Volunteer 8%
Marry 7%
*25% of immediate college-bound students will be first-generation attendees.

Most students plan to go to college for reasons of their own—only 6% include parents' expectations among their reasons for going to college—and the most popular reason is the opportunity it provides to learn a profession or trade (61%). Students also place importance on being independent (29%), being able to make a difference (27%), and meeting new people (15%) as reasons to attend college.

Most students (68%) anticipate fulfilling these goals at a traditional four-year institution, although many believe that these goals can be accomplished at other types of higher education institutions as well. Two-year colleges (7%), community colleges (7%), and training or vocational schools (6%) attract one in five students as options for continuing their education.

Students show somewhat unrealistic optimism, tempered with bits of realism, in their estimations of how they will pay for college. Although two-thirds believe that their parents already have begun to plan for tuition payments, 27% of students say that their parents are not planning. In addition, 57% of secondary school students expect scholarships to pay for at least part of their college education, and 42% expect their parents to pay.

Nevertheless, to help pay for college costs 40% of students plan to take a job outside school, 18% plan to take a job as a work-study student, and 32% plan to take out loans. If given a choice between attending a top-reputation school, which would mean living far from home and taking out loans, or attending a school with a lesser reputation but that would allow them to live closer to home and avoid loans, more students would

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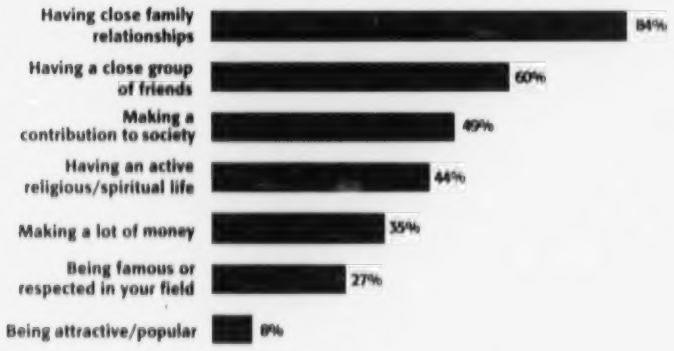
opt for the latter school (42% to 54%). Above-average-income students opt for the top-reputation school in slightly higher numbers, whereas lower-income students tend to choose the school close to home.

In measuring success later in life, today's teenagers for the most part define achievement in nontraditional and intangible ways. Students name close family relationships as the most important benchmark of a successful life; 84% say that this is very important to their personal definition of success. Likewise, having a close group of friends ranks high as an important element of success. Close to half of today's teens assert that the extent to which they make a contribution will factor heavily into their assessment of personal success, and 44% say the same of the extent to which they have an active religious life. Making a lot of money at a job (35% very important), being famous or respected (27%), and being attractive or popular (8%) are significantly less important measures of success for this generation of American youth.

High School Students' Definitions Of Success In Life

(% saying each is very important in their definition of success)



Youth Views On The Media

Today's youth report mixed feelings about the influence of the media in their life. Despite the many reports that point to violence in video games and song lyrics as contributing causes of such incidents as the tragedy at Columbine High School, students refuse to blame the media for violence among youths in schools. Only 6% of teenagers say that too much violence on TV, in movies, or in video games is the biggest cause of violence in schools. Students cite in greater proportions than media influences such causes as bullying (29%), uninvolved parents (27%), schools' not noticing troubled kids (13%), declining morals and values (12%), and the ease of access to weapons (10%).

Yet, close to half (46%) of today's youth believe that the media have a negative effect on the values and morals of young people. Only one in ten (11%) students think that the media have a positive effect on their values and morals, and 36% say that the media do not affect young people's values and morals. Seniors in high school (58%) are much more likely than are younger students (freshmen 42%, sophomores 45%, juniors 42%) to say that the media contribute to negative values and morals. Students' opinions on the influence of the media also depend on the kind of school they attend. Only 44% of public school students believe that the media contribute negatively to values and morals, compared with 58% of students who attend school outside the public school system, a category that includes many religious schools.

Teenagers show similar divisions of opinion on the question of downloading Internet music. Today's youth live with technology that allows them to download copyrighted music from the Internet for free, without the permission of either the artist or the record company. More than half of students (53%), however, simply choose not to take a position in this debate, saying that it is neither wrong for them to download nor for the record companies to block them from downloading. Among those who do take a stand, however, more believe that is wrong to take advantage of artists by downloading for free (25% of all students) than believe that it is wrong for the record companies to try to block downloading (17% of all students).

The survey also asks students to predict their reactions if offered opportunities for different jobs. Overall, about four in 10 students say that they would work in the media if presented with an opportunity, higher than the 35% who say they would consider a career in government or public service.

METHODOLOGY

The 2001 State of Our Nation's Youth survey was conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates, one of the leading survey research firms in the United States. Now in its 30th year of operation, the firm has conducted well over 5,000 public opinion surveys, and has administered and analyzed interviews among more than three million individuals in that time. Hart Research also has undertaken more than 4,000 focus group sessions.

Hart Research has been at the cutting edge of change in the field of public opinion for the past quarter century. Its political division (Garin-Hart-Yang) has worked with more than 40 United States senators and 30 governors, and on more than 400 political campaigns.

Since 1989, Hart Research, in conjunction with Robert Teeter's Coldwater Corporation, has conducted the public opinion surveys for NBC News and The Wall Street Journal. This represents the first time any outside firm was retained by a network to conduct surveys that bear the name of the sponsoring organization. These surveys are widely regarded as barometers of American opinion.

Peter D. Hart Research Associates conducted the 2001 State of Our Nation's Youth survey from May 2 to 15, 2001. The survey was conducted by telephone among 1,014 students across the country. The sample for this poll was drawn in the following manner: 505 geographic points were randomly selected proportionate to the population of each region and, within each region, by size of place. Individuals were selected in accordance with a probability sample design that gives all telephone numbers, listed and unlisted, an equal chance to be included.

One student from each household was included, selected by a systematic procedure to provide an approximate balance of respondents by sex. Only students age 13 through 18 who identified themselves as ninth through twelfth graders, or freshmen through seniors in high school, were accepted as survey respondents.

The data's statistical margin of sampling error is ±3.1 percentage points among all students at the 95% confidence level, although sample tolerances for subgroups are larger and sampling error is just one form of error or bias that can affect survey results. Minimal weights have been applied to sex and year in school.

The data reported here are the property of the Horatio Alger Association, which must be credited whenever these results are cited.

DATA TABLES

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Distribution Of Students By Age	
	High School Students %
12 years old or younger	-
13 years old	3
14 years old	11
15 years old	23
16 years old	25
17 years old	22
18 years old	12
19 years old	4
20 years old or older	-
Not sure/refused	-
How old are you?	

Distribution Of Students By Grade	
	High School Students %
Ninth grade/freshman in high school	30
Tenth grade/sophomore in high school	26
Eleventh grade/junior in high school	23
Twelfth grade/senior in high school	21
Other (VOL)	-
Not sure	-
What year or grade in school are you currently in? If you've already finished the school year, what grade did you just complete?	

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Distribution Of Students By School Type	
	High School Students %
Public school	87
Private religious school	7
Private non-religious school	3
Other type of school	2
Taught by parents/home school	1
Not sure	-

What type of school do you attend? Is it a public school, a private religious school, a private non-religious school, another type of school, or are you taught by your parents or someone else at home?

Hours Per Week Spent Doing Homework	
	High School Students %
1 to 5 hours	56
6 to 10 hours	26
11 to 15 hours	9
16 to 20 hours	3
More than 20 hours	3
None	2
Not sure	1

During the school year, about how many hours a week would you say you spend doing homework?

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Self-Reported Grades On Last Report Cards

	High School Students %
Mostly "A"s	20
Mostly "B"s	8
A mix of "A"s and "B"s	33
Mostly "C"s	7
A mix of "B"s and "C"s	26
Most were below "C"s	6

Which of these choices comes the closest to describing the grades you received on your last report card?

Students' Favorite Classes

	One Of My Favorites %	One Of My Least Favorites %	Somewhere In Between %	Not Offered At My School/ Don't Take That Class %	Not Sure %
Physical education or sports*	55	13	21	11	-
Art, music or drama*	52	9	13	25	1
History, or social studies*	43	23	27	7	-
English	42	23	34	1	-
Science	41	23	31	5	-
Mathematics	36	37	25	2	-
Computer use or programming	34	13	22	30	1
Foreign languages*	32	21	22	24	1
Health education, which could include sex education*	24	16	35	25	-
Vocational classes, such as wood shop or mechanics*	24	9	11	55	1
Government	19	17	18	45	1
Public speaking*	17	13	10	59	1
Home economics*	17	11	18	52	2
Business, or personal finance*	16	9	14	60	1
Religion*	9	5	8	77	1

I'm going to name some classes that you may take at your school. For each one, please tell me whether it is one of your favorite classes, one of your least favorite classes, or somewhere in between. *(*Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

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Participation In School-related Activities

	High School Students %
Athletic teams/clubs	59
Band/orchestra/choir	26
Drama/theater	16
Honor societies	15
Service/volunteer clubs	15
School publications, such as the newspaper or yearbook	14
Career-oriented clubs	12
Cheerleading/dance team	10
Language clubs	10
Student council/government	10
Debate/speech team	7
Science clubs	5
None	15
Other (VOL)	3
Not sure/refused	-

What school-related activities do you participate in at your school, either now or at any other point during high school?

Degree Of Involvement In School

	High School Students %
Very involved	29
Somewhat involved	50
Not that involved	14
Not involved at all	7
Not sure	-

Thinking about the activities you participate in and the time you spend at school, how involved would you say you are in your school?

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Work During School Year

	High School Students %
Yes	43
No	57
Not sure	-

Did you have a job during this school year?

Hours Per Week Spent At A Job
(Among Students Who Work Outside Of School)

	High School Students %
1 to 5 hours	8
6 to 10 hours	18
11 to 15 hours	20
16 to 20 hours	26
More than 20 hours	27
Not sure	1

How many hours did you work in a typical week?

Reasons For Work During School Year
(Among Students Who Work Outside Of School)

	High School Students %
I don't have to work, but I want the extra money	63
I have to work to have money for college	16
I work or volunteer for experience or to contribute to society	9
I have to work to help my family pay the bills	9
Other (VOL)	3
Not sure	-

Which of the following reasons best explains why you work at a job during the school year?

Grades Given To Students' Schools

	High School Students %
A	20
B	48
C	22
D	6
F	4
Not sure	-
GRADE POINT AVERAGE	**2.7**

If you could give your school a grade, from A to F, what grade would you give?

Students Rate Education Reform Ideas

	Would Improve Schools A Lot %	Would Improve Schools A Little %	Would Not Make A Difference %	Not Sure %
Having fewer students in each class so that students can get more attention	64	19	16	1
Giving students greater access to computers and the Internet	56	26	17	1
Testing students to ensure that they have mastered basic skills before they can move on to the next grade	52	28	18	2
Increasing teachers' pay to attract and keep good teachers	46	28	24	2
Making the school day, or the school year, longer	7	24	67	2

Here are a few ideas that some people have to help improve schools and education in this country. For each one I read, please tell me whether you think the idea would improve schools a lot, would improve schools a little, or would not make a difference in schools.

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Importance Of A College Degree

	High School Students %
Critical	35
Very important	49
Somewhat important	14
Not at all important	2
Not sure	-

When it comes to being successful later in life, how important do you think it is for people today to graduate from college?

How Interesting Or Challenging Are Classes?

	High School Students %
Statement A/challenging and interesting	72
Statement B/not challenging or interesting	20
Some of both (VOL)	8
Not sure	-

Please tell me which of the following two statements comes closer to your opinion about classes and coursework at your school.

Statement A: The courses at my school are mostly challenging and interesting. There is a lot of opportunity for discussion in the classroom, and I feel like my classes are preparing me for the future.

Statement B: The courses at my school are not very challenging or interesting. There is little opportunity for open discussion in the classroom, and I do not feel like my classes are preparing me for the future.

(Asked of one-half the respondents.)

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Are Studies And Grades A Priority?

	High School Students %
Statement A/studies and grades are a priority	63
Statement B/studies are secondary	32
Some of both (VOL)	5
Not sure	-

Please tell me which statement comes closer to your opinion about how some students might think about high school.

Statement A: It is important to me personally to do the best I can in all my classes. I take challenging classes, and my studies and grades are a priority.

Statement B: My studies are secondary to my extracurricular activities, art, sports, and social life. I work hard in the classes I enjoy, but I do not consider studies a priority.

(Asked of one-half the respondents.)

Is Homework A Priority?

	High School Students %
Statement A/homework is a priority	44
Statement B/never have the time for homework	49
Some of both (VOL)	6
Not sure	1

Please tell me which statement comes closer to your opinion about doing homework.

Statement A: Doing homework is a priority for me. I complete it before participating in other activities.

Satement B: I know I should do more homework, but I never seem to have the time.

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Strictness Of Conduct Rules In School

	High School Students %
Much too strict	9
Too strict	32
About right	40
Not strict enough	11
Much too lenient	7
Not sure	1

Would you say that the rules on student conduct in your school are much too strict, too strict, about right, not strict enough, or much too lenient? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

Concern And Availability Of Teachers, Administrators, And Family

	Applies %	Does Not Apply %	Not Sure %
There is at least one family member who I can confide in and talk to about things	90	10	-
There is at least one teacher or administrator who personally cares about my success	89	10	1
There is at least one teacher or administrator who I can talk to about my school problems	88	12	-
It is important to most of my teachers and administrators that I do my best in school	87	11	2
The teachers and administrators at my school have taken all the necessary steps to help me feel safe and secure at school	74	24	2
There is at least one teacher or administrator who I can talk to about my personal problems	71	28	1

I'm going to read you some statements, and for each one, please tell whether it applies to you or does not apply to you.

Students' Feelings About Safety In School

	High School Students %
Worry a great deal	22
Worry a fair amount	14
Worry just a little	30
Do not worry at all	34
Not sure	-

How much do you worry about safety and incidents such as a student bringing a gun to school? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

Causes Of Violence In Schools, According To Students

	High School Students %
Students picking on or bullying other students	29
Parents not being involved or spending enough time with their kids	27
Schools not noticing or helping when students are troubled	13
Declining values and morals	12
Guns and other weapons being easy to get	10
Too much violence on TV, in movies, or in video games	6
Not sure	3

Which of the following would you say is the biggest cause of violence among students in schools, such as the shootings at Columbine and Santana High Schools? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

Family Members In The Home

	High School Students %
Mother	88
Father	63
Step-parent(s)	10
Brother(s)	45
Sister(s)	42
Step-sibling(s)	2
Grandparent(s)	8
Other (VOL)	5
Not sure/refused	-

What family members live with you?

Easier Then Or Now?

	Parents Had It Easier %	Have It Easier Now %	About The Same %	Not Sure %
Getting good grades	35	24	38	3
Getting into college	36	35	24	5
Earning extra money	16	57	24	3
Meeting a husband or wife	24	18	47	11
Making friends	17	25	56	2

When it comes to each one of the items listed, do you think that your parents had it easier when they were your age, that you have it easier now, or that it was about the same for them as it is for you? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

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Students' Social Lives

	High School Students %
I have a group of friends I hang out with	69
I hang out with only one or two close friends	19
I spend most of my time with my family	7
I spend most of my time alone	3
Other (VOL)	2
Not sure	-

Which of the following statements best describes you?

Which One Would You Rather Be?

	High School Students %
Rich	27
Smart	66
Beautiful	5
Not sure	2

If you could be rich, smart, or beautiful - but only one of the three - which would you choose? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

High School Students And Pressure

	Major Problem %	Minor Problem %	Not A Problem %	Not Sure %
Too much pressure to get good grades	26	36	38	-
Too much pressure to look a certain way	16	30	53	1
Financial pressure	15	27	57	1
Family problems, or not getting along with your parents	14	32	54	-
Pressure to do drugs or to drink	12	24	64	-
Pressure to engage in sexual activity before you are ready	10	20	69	1
Loneliness or feeling left out	9	24	67	-

I am going to read you a few problems that some high school students face. For each one I read, please tell me whether it is a major problem for you, a minor problem for you, or not a problem for you.

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CHOOSING ROLE MODELS

	High School Students
	%
Family member	46
Friend/family friend	16
Entertainment/artist or writer	12
Teacher/educator	7
Sports	7
Religious leader	6
Business leader	3
Political leader	2
Other (VOL)	-
Not sure	1

Please think about one particular person whom you would consider to be a role model. If you had to pick one person as a role model, which of the following categories would your role model be in?

CHOICE OF FAMILY MEMBER AS ROLE MODEL

(AMONG THOSE WHO CHOOSE A FAMILY MEMBER AS A ROLE MODEL)

	High School Students
	%
Mother	40
Father	26
Grandparent	9
Brother	7
Sister	7
Aunt/uncle	6
Cousin	3
Other (VOL)	1
Not sure	1

What family member do you consider a role model?

Feelings About Free Music Downloads Off The Internet

	High School Students %
Wrong to download	25
Wrong to stop downloading	17
Not wrong either way	53
Not sure	5

Would you say that it's wrong to take advantage of the artists by downloading their music without paying for it, that it's wrong for the music companies to try to block downloading, or do you not think it is wrong either way? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

The Effect Entertainment Media Have On Values And Morals

	High School Students %
Negative effect	46
Positive effect	11
No effect	36
Not sure	7

Overall, would you say that the entertainment media today, such as music, movies, television, and video games, have a negative effect, a positive effect, or no effect on the values and morals of young people? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

Plans For College

	High School Students %
Yes, plan to go to a four-year college or university	68
Yes, plan to go to a two-year college or university	7
Yes, plan to go to a training to vocational school	6
Yes, plan to go to a community college	7
Yes, not sure what kind of college (VOL)	4
No, do not plan to go to college	5
Not sure	3

Do you plan to go to college sometime after you graduate from high school? Which of the following best describes the kind of college you plan to go to - a four-year college or university, a two-year college or university, a training or vocational school, or a community college?

Plans For After High School

	High School Students %
Continue my education	74
Get a job	34
Travel	18
Join the armed forces	10
Join a volunteer organization	8
Get married	7
Other (VOL)	2
Not sure	2

What are your immediate plans for after high school?

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The Importance Of Particular Classes For Success In Life

	Mean	Very Important 8-10 %	5-7 %	Not Very Important 1-4 %	Cannot Rate %
Mathematics	8.4	76	19	5	-
English	8.4	76	19	5	-
Computers	8.4	75	21	4	-
Business	7.6	58	35	7	-
Science	7.0	47	42	11	-
History	6.5	36	46	18	-
Music or Art	5.5	22	46	32	-

There's been a lot of talk lately about the things that young people like you need to learn in school in order to be successful in life. For each class I name, please tell me how important you think it is for young people to learn that topic or skills. Use a scale from one to ten, on which a ten means that it's extremely important and a one means that it's not important.

Reasons For Going To College Or Vocational School

	High School Students %
Learning a profession or trade and being able to get a good-paying job	61
Being independent and living on my own	29
Being able to make a difference or change things for the better	27
Meeting new people and having fun	15
My family expects me to go	6
All (VOL)	4
None/other (VOL)	-
Not sure	-

Here are some reasons people might give for going to college or vocational school. Please tell me which one or two reasons are the most important to you.

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Definitions Of Success

	Very Important %	Somewhat Important %	Not At All Important %	Not Sure %
Having close family relationships	84	13	3	-
Having a close group of friends	60	30	10	-
Making a contribution to society	49	44	7	-
Having an active religious or spiritual life	44	35	20	1
Making a lot of money at your job	35	49	16	-
Being famous or respected in your field	27	44	29	-
Being attractive and popular	8	39	53	-

People today define success in lots of ways. For each of the following, please tell me how important the item is in your personal definition of success in life - very important, somewhat important, or not important at all.

Starting To Plan To Pay For College

	High School Students %
Yes, have begun to plan	66
No, have not begun to plan	27
Not sure whether my parents are planning	7
Refused	-

Have you or your parents begun planning how to pay for your college education? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

Financing A College Education

	High School Students %
Scholarships	57
Parents will pay	42
A job outside school	40
Student loans	32
Grants	21
A student-sponsored job/work-study	18
Other	3
Not sure	3

In which of the following ways do you plan to finance your college education? *(Asked of one-half the respndents.)*

Where Would You Attend College?

	High School Students %
Top reputation/loans/far from home	42
Lesser reputation/no loans/near home	54
Not sure	4

If you had a choice, would you attend a school with a top reputation even if it meant taking out loans and living far away from home, or would you go to a school with a lesser reputation that was close by and for which you could pay without loans? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

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Career After Graduation

	High School Students
	%
Physician, doctor, surgeon, medicine/medical field	9
Computers/technician, engineering, programmer	8
Business, business administration/management	7
Teacher, education	7
Attorney, law	6
Don't know; no response	10

What career are you interested in pursuing after you graduate?

Whether Or Not To Pursue Selected Careers

	Jump At The Opportunity	Think About It/ Probably Take It	Think About It/ Probably Not Take It	Definitely Not Take It	Not Sure
	%	%	%	%	%
The media or journalism	11	31	28	29	1
Government or public service	7	28	24	39	2
Work overseas for five years	9	22	22	44	3
The military or armed services	8	17	23	51	1

For each career option, if you had an opportunity to pursue a career in that field, please tell me whether you would jump at the opportunity, think about it and probably take the opportunity, think about it but probably not take the opportunity, or definitely not take the opportunity? *(Asked of one-half the respondents.)*

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Mission
OF THE

o recognize contemporary role models whose experiences exemplify that opportunities for a successful life are available to all individuals who are dedicated to the principles of integrity, hard work, perseverance, and compassion for others.

o provide scholarship assistance to deserving young people who have demonstrated integrity and determination in overcoming adversity in their lives and who have shown the academic potential and personal aspiration to make a unique contribution to society.

o educate America's youth about the limitless possibilities that are available through the American free enterprise system and to underscore the importance of service to others.

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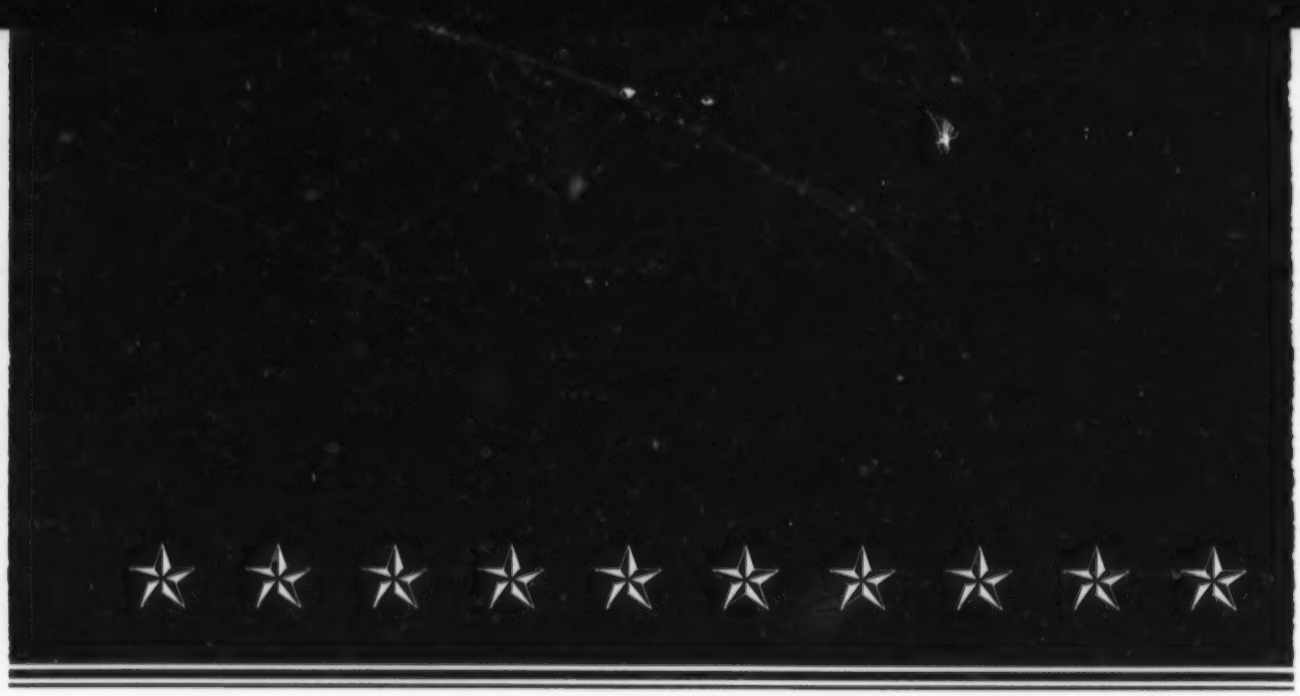

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